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Shaffer-Corona: 'In My Heart, I Know That I Won'

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Forget what the D.C. elections board says.

At-large D.C. Board of Education member Frank Shaffer-Corona insists that he actually won reelection Tuesday — even though complete but unofficial returns list him coming in 12th out of 17 candidates.

"In my heart, I know that I won that election," Shaffer-Corona proclaimed to the three supporters who showed up for his victory party yesterday morning in the rear of an Adams-Morgan bar called Cafedon.

Despite thereturns, Shaffer-Corona, who only seconds before had traced his family tree on the back of a cocktail napkin to show his links with Spanish royalty, refused to admit to a reporter that his four-year reign as the school board's most controversial member was finished.

"These returns are fantasy. They are not reality based," he said. "The fact that they went to such extremes to embarrass me and make the vote count look so small just shows how effective I have been."

Shaffer-Corona says he is not sure who "they" are. It's probably someone that he offended during his term, he explains. And the list of people he offended is long, he proudly admits. At one point, some election watchers claimed the campaign had become an "anybody but Shaffer-Corona" initiative.

Perhaps it was Mayor Marion Barry, he says. "The mayor doesn't like me . . ."

Or it could be the D.C. police. "They are the ones who pick up the ballots and deliver them to city hall."

Or it might be The Washington Post. "I think the Post has been less than objective since they first heard of me."

Or it might have been the school board. "They're a pain in the behind. Who the hell wants to go to work every day with nine yahoos who are as discourteous, dishonest, and rude as those folks are to me?"

Or it might even be the CIA — which, he says, "doesn't like my PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] friends" — or the State Department — "which turned its back on me when I was trying to resolve the [Iranian] hostage crisis" — or maybe even the "super-rich who don't like some Mexican making waves."

It could even be a computer mistake. "That's the same computer that sends out water bills for thousands of dollars when they should be in the teens. And it's the computer that at no time knows where the city's money is."

But regardless of who "they" are and no matter how "they" manipulated the elections, Shaffer-Corona explains, "they" failed to destroy his bond with his people.

"I know that the oppressed people in this city still believe in me and they supported me on election day," says Shaffer-Corona, who has been the highest ranking Hispanic official in the city.

And that is why Shaffer-Corona says he might seek an investigation of the election during the remaining weeks of his lame-duck term. "Not for me, I've already proven that a person in politics can be capable of honesty, commitment, service to the people and love, and that's enough for me."

"But I might seek an investigation for the voters who supported me to prove I'm still not going to let anyone dump on me or them."

If the school board will miss something with him gone, he says, it will be his challenges, his willingness "to champion the unpopular cause."

If he fails to get the election investigated, Shaffer-Corona says he will file for unemployment and write a book about minority involvement in the hostage crisis.

It was his use of \$1,900 worth of school board funds to pay for telephone calls to Tehran in an attempt to resolve the crisis that first outraged many voters. Shaffer-Corona also was heavily criticized for going to Beirut to meet with the Palestine Liberation Organization and to Cuba, at school board expense, to attend a youth conference.

"When that book is printed and people finally understand what I did, then they will be sorry I'm not on the board," he says.

"I'm not going to vaniah. A City Council election is coming up and I'm sure that many will want to draft me. But," says Shaffer-Corona, "I will decline."

"I want to be available when the next school board election comes around."